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GAMING DEVICE HAVING AN ANIMATED FIGURE

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GAMING DEVICE HAVING AN ANIMATED FIGURE

CROSS REFERENCES TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

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This application claims priority of U.S. provisional patent application serial number

60/241,383, filed on October 17, 2000.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

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1. Field of Invention

The present invention relates to a gaming system and method having an animated figure.

More particularly, the animated figure is a three-dimensional animated figure having a control

system.

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2. Description of Related Art

Gaming Devices

Gaming devices are well known in the art and a large variety of gaming devices have

been developed. In general, gaming devices allow users or players to play a game. In many

25   casino-type gaming devices, the outcome of the game depends, at least in part, on a randomly

generated event. For example, a gaming device may use a random number generator to generate

a random or pseudo-random number. The random number may then be compared to a predefined

table to determine the outcome of the event. If the random number falls within a certain range of

numbers on the table, the player may win a predefined prize. The table may also contain display information that allows the gaming device to generate a display that corresponds to the outcome of the game. The gaming device may present the outcome of the game on a large variety of display devices, such as mechanical spinning reels or video screens.

Bonus Prizes

Some gaming devices award bonuses in addition to prizes that are awarded in the primary game. A bonus can be defined as an additional prize that is awarded to the player when a predefined event occurs. An example of a bonus game can be found in U.S. patent number 5,848,932 issued to Adams. One of the gaming devices described in this document comprises three spinning reels and a spinning wheel bonus display. When predetermined indicia are displayed on the spinning reels of the primary game, the wheel can be activated to indicate a bonus prize. The bonus prize is awarded in addition to any prizes awarded in the primary game.

Generally, bonus prizes are offered in such games in order to increase the excitement and enjoyment experienced by players. This attracts more players to the game and encourages players to play longer. When gaming devices attract more players and the players play longer, they tend to be more commercially successful relative to other gaming devices.

Games Having Animated Characters

It is well known that games of chance such as slot machines may have an animated character which operates in conjunction with the game of chance. For example, in <u>Slot Machines</u>, by Marshall Fey, a slot machine called "Shoot the Bear" describes a bear which stands up and growls when a jackpot is hit.

More generally, gaming devices having animated characters are well known. For example, in U.S. Patent 4,799,678, hereinafter the "'678 patent", a game device which interacts with an animated character to simulate a game show is described. More particularly, the '678 patent describes an electronic game playing device with a synthesized voice and an animated

5   game show host character. The animated game show host character has different features such as eyes, head and arms which are activated at different times in response to synthesized voice or the output of an audio tape.

SUMMARY OF INVENTION

10   **1.   Advantages of the Invention**

One of the advantages of the present invention is that it provides a gaming device having an animated figure that identifies a prize.

A further advantage of the present invention is that it provides a control system for controlling the actions of animated gaming system.

15   Another advantage of the present invention is that it provides a control system for controlling the actions of animated display system.

A further advantage of the present invention is that it provides a housing having at least one symbol which represents a prize.

A further advantage of the present invention is that it provides an animated gaming

20   device that may be used as a stand-alone game.

Another advantage of the present invention is that it provides an animated gaming device

which may be used in combination with another gaming device.

An additional advantage of the present invention is that the animated gaming device is engaged after a bonusing event.

Another advantage of the present invention is that it provides a housing having a plurality

5   of prizes which are identified by the animated figure.

Yet another advantage of the present invention is that it provides a gaming device having an animated figure that requires little maintenance.

These and other advantages of the present invention may be realized by reference to other portions of the specification, claims, and abstract.

10   **2.   Brief Description of the Invention**

The present invention relates to an animated gaming system and animated display system, comprising a housing, an animated figure and an animated element. The housing for the animated gaming system include having a symbol which represents a prize. The animated figure has a three-dimensional form. The animated element is operatively coupled to the animated

15   figure and is controlled by a control system which manages the operations of the animated figure. The control system includes one or more controlled outputs which are forced to change in a desired manner as time progresses.

The above description sets forth, rather broadly, the more important features of the present invention so that the detailed description of the preferred embodiment that follows may

20   be better understood and contributions of the present invention to the art may be better appreciated. There are, of course, additional features of the invention that will be described

below and will form the subject matter of claims. In this respect, before explaining at least one

preferred embodiment of the invention in detail, it is to be understood that the invention is not

limited in its application to the details of the construction and to the arrangement of the

components set forth in the following description or as illustrated in the drawings. The invention

5   is capable of other embodiments and of being practiced and carried out in various ways. Also, it

is to be understood that the phraseology and terminology employed herein are for the purpose of

description and should not be regarded as limiting.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

10   Preferred embodiments of the present invention are shown in the accompanying drawings

wherein:

Figure 1A is substantially a front view of a gaming device having an animated figure

which identifies a first prize.

15   Figure 1B is substantially a block diagram of a system for controlling the gaming device

of Figure 1A.

Figure 1C is substantially a front view of the gaming device of Figure 1A in which a first

animated element is moved to identify a second prize.

Figure 1D is substantially a front view of the gaming device of Figure 1A in which the

20   animated figure is rotated and second animated element is moved to identify a third prize.

Figure 2A is substantially a flow chart of the operation of the gaming device shown in

Figure 1A through 1B.

Figure 2B is substantially a more detailed flow chart of the operation of the gaming

device shown in Figure 1A through 1B.

Figure 3 is substantially a front view of a gaming system which includes a first gaming

5   device and a second gaming device having an animated figure.

Figure 4 is substantially a flow char of the operation of the gaming system in Figure 3.

Figure 5A is substantially a front view of a gaming system which includes a first gaming

device and second gaming device having an animated figured configured to dispense a fortune.

Figure 5B is substantially a front view of the gaming system of Figure 5A in which the

10   animated figure identifies a first prize.

Figure 5C is substantially a front view of the gaming system of Figure 5B in which the

animated figure identifies a second prize.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

15   In the following detailed description of the preferred embodiments, reference is made to

the accompanying drawings, which form a part of this application. The drawings show, by way

of illustration, specific embodiments in which the invention may be practiced. It is to be

understood that other embodiments may be utilized and structural changes may be made with out

departing from the scope of the present invention.

20   Generally, the present invention comprises an animated gaming device which is shown in

Figure 1A. The animated gaming system is indicated by reference number 10 and comprises an

animated figure 12 which is operatively coupled to a housing 14. Preferably, the animated figure

12 comprises a plurality of robotic components in communication with a control system having

an embedded processor. The housing 14 includes a plurality of symbols which indicate a prize

awarded to a player. In operation, the movements of animated figure 12 is determined by the

5   control system. In one embodiment, the animated figure identifies a prize located on the housing

14. The animated gaming system10 may be operated as a stand-alone machine, or in

combination with another gaming device. The animated gaming system 10 and the various

combinations for its implementation are described in further detail below.

Animated Gaming System

Referring again to Figure 1A, the animated gaming system 10 of the present invention

includes the housing 14, the animated figure 12 and an animated element 16. The housing 14

includes a variety of symbols which represent a variety of prizes. By way of example and not of

limitation, the symbols displayed on the housing may include numbers, letters, and various other

15   shapes.

The prizes are represented by symbols which may represent a monetary award 18a

through 18d, or additional credits 20, or a progressive networked prize 22 which is a prize

created by an array of networked games, or an additional opportunity to play a game 20, or a

prize which is an object 24 such as an automobile or horse. The animated figure 12 has a three-

20   dimensional form which is controlled by a control system having a plurality of robotic

components. The animated figure includes at least one animated element 16 which identifies or

points to one or more of the symbols displayed on the housing 14.

The animated figure 12 may be in the form of a realistic or fictional animal. Alternatively, the animated figure 12 may have human features and be human-like or be in the form of a cartoon character or the like. Furthermore, the animated figure 12 may be a relatively

5   simple figure which generates limited sounds and provides limited motion. Alternatively, the animated figure could be a sophisticated system having the ability to speak and to make very precise and complex movements. It shall be appreciated by those skilled in the art having the benefit of this disclosure that the description of "animated figure" includes robots which are commonly used in other industries and are commonly available in the marketplace. Such robots

10 and the sources for these robots are described in the book entitled "Illusion of Life Lifelike Robots," by Gene William Poor, published in 1991 by Creative Learning Systems, Inc. of San Diego, California.

Referring to Figure 1B there is shown a block diagram of the control system 30 which manages the digital signals that control the operations of the animated figure 12. The boundary

15 conditions for the control system 30 are provided to teach some of the functions of the control system 30 and are not intended to restrict the method and type of control system used. By way of the example, the animated figure 12 is controlled by an the processor 32. Additionally, the processor 32 is configured to communicate with a memory 34. The memory may store software programs or may provide caching functionality. Although not shown flash memory, EEPROM,

20 EPROM, ROM, SRAM, DRAM and other forms of memory may used.

In operation, the animated figure 12 is engaged by the insertion or transfer of a token into

a token receiving component 35 which is in communication with processor 32. The token

receiving component 35 may receive a variety of different tokens which may include coins, paper

currency, coupons, tickets, credit cards, debit cards, electronic credits or any other such

transactional medium.

5   In one embodiment the processor in combination with memory 34 and random number

generator software are configured to generate a random number. In an alternative embodiment

an integrated circuit or a ROM may be configured to generate a random number. The random

number generator produces a random or pseudo random number for each game for the animated

gaming system 10. The outcome of the animated gaming system 10 may be determined by

10   comparing the random number to a table of outcomes stored in a memory and accessed by

processor 32.

        The random number is then used to determine the prize to be awarded according to a

table. The table is also referred to as a "pay table." A number of different tables of outcomes

may be used and different tables may be used for different games. The tables can be designed so

15   that different prizes have different probabilities of being awarded. Such design techniques are

well known in gaming. Examples of such designs are shown in U.S. patent number 4,448,419,

issued to Telnaes, and U.S. patent number 5,456,465, issued to Durham. The combination of

processor 32 and memory 34 causes the animated gaming system 10 to display the outcome of

the game that corresponds to the outcome of the random number generator and table. It is

20   recognized that animated gaming system 10 may operate in many other ways and still achieve the

objects of the present invention.

In the preferred embodiment a controller which is defined by the combination of a

processor 32 and a memory 34 generates a random number. The processor 32 and memory 34

combination then compare the random number to a pay table similar to that described for game

apparatus 20 or as described in U.S. patent number 5,823,874, issued to Adams. A simple pay

5   table may appear as follows:

Random Number	Location Number	Amount Paid
0.00 to 0.03	1	$25.00
0.04 to 0.20	2	0.00
0.21 to 0.26	3	$5.00
0.27 to 0.76	4	0.00
0.77 to 0.82	5	$30.00
0.83 to 0.84	6	Progressive
0.85 to 0.89	7	Free Play
0.90 to 0.95	8	Multiplier X2
0.96 to 1.00	9	Other Symbol

For example, if the random number generator produced 0.03 value, the animated element 16

10   would move to location number 1 which identifies the $25.00 prize as shown in Figure 1A.

Referring to Figure 1C, if the random number generator produced a 0.45 value and the animated

element is moved to location 5 according to the table above and displays the $30 prize shown.

Referring to Figure 1D, if the random number generator produced a 0.85 value, then the animated

figure 12 is rotated about axis 38 and a second animated element 40 is moved to location 7 which

15   identifies the "free play" prize.

The present invention is not limited to the example pay table shown. A variety of

different housings 14 may be used which display a variety of prizes at a variety of different

locations. For each different housing a new pay table identifying the appropriate location is

loaded into the processor 32 and memory 34 combination. The housing 14 may include different

kinds of prizes, besides monetary prizes, may be awarded. For example, the prizes may be

5   goods, services, or additional games. The goods and services may be awarded in the form of

physical objects, tickets, vouchers, coupons, etc. Additional games may be presented in the form

of tickets, such as scratch off lottery tickets. In the embodiments in which tickets, vouchers, and

coupons are used, the objects are dispensed using an internally or externally mounted dispenser

36 (see Figure 1A). Such dispensers are well known in the art. Additionally, a coin dispenser

10   (nor shown) well known in the are may by used.

In an alternative embodiment, the animated gaming system includes an additional

plurality of animated figures (not shown) within the same housing. The plurality of animated

figures may be managed by the control system 30 described above. The plurality of animated

figures may include a plurality of animated figures 12 within one housing 14 wherein each of

15   said plurality of animated figures identify a symbol which in combination with the output from

each of the animated figures results in a prize.

Control System

The control system includes one or more controlled outputs which are forced to change in

20   a desired manner as time progresses. Referring back to Figure 1B, the animated figure includes a

processor 32 in communication with a sound generator 42 and a motor controller 44. The control

system 30 manages the digital signals that control the operations of the animated figure 12. The

boundary conditions for the control system 30 describe some of the functions of the control

system 30. By way of the example, the animated figure 12 is controlled by the processor 32

which operatively coupled to memory 34. The memory 34 provides storage for various software

5   programs or subroutines or may provide caching functionality. Although not shown flash

memory, EEPROM, EPROM, ROM, SRAM, DRAM and other forms of memory or any

combination thereof may used.

The sound generator 42 provides local storage for a variety of different sounds. The

variety of different sounds may be downloaded from processor 32 and memory 34 or may be pre-

10   programmed with sounds. The sound generator communicates output signals to a transducer 46

which generates an audible output.

The motor controller 44 is configured to provide local storage for a variety of different

commands which control the motors 48a, 48b and 48c. The motor controller may receive the

commands from processor 32 or may have a plurality of commands stored locally in motor

15   controller 44. Each of the motors 48a, 48b and 48c may control a plurality of electromotive or

hydraulic devices for causing various movement such as the mouth or arms or other animated

element of the animated figure. The animated element of animated figure includes an element

of the animated figure which is subject to the control of processor 32 or motor controller 44.

In a simple illustrative embodiment, the animated figure 12 comprises only a portion of

20   an animal such as the head of a figure. When the control system 30 generates the appropriate

output, the mouth of the figure is moved according to the motor controller 44 and a sound is

generated according to the sound generator 42.

In an more complex illustrative embodiment, the animated figure 12 may take the shape

of a lifelike human or cartoon character capable of sophisticated movements and speech. The

animated figure 12 may be programmed to frown or cry and then console the slot machine player

5   upon an indication that the player did not win a prize. Alternatively, the animated figure could

be programmed to jump up and down and sing or scream such statements as, "You have won," or

"You are a winner" or the like. It may also be possible to have the animated figure do tricks such

as somersaults or to throw candy or other safe projectiles at the slot machine player.

Method for Operating the Animated Gaming System

10   Referring to Figure 2A as well as Figure 1A there is shown a method 50 for operating the

animated gaming system 10 of Figure 1A through 1D. The method 50 for operating the animated

gaming system 10 described includes the housing 14, the animated figure 12, and at least one

animated element 16 is initiated at block 52.

15   At block 52, the method provides for engaging the animated gaming system 10. The

animated gaming device may be engaged in a variety of methods which are described in further

detail below. For illustrative purposes, the animated gaming device may be engaged by receiving

a request to enable the animated gaming system 10. The request is communicated to processor

32 (see Figure 1B). The method then proceeds to either block 54 or block 56 or block 58.

20   At block 54, the method then proceeds to select a random number. The random number

is generated by a random number generator which is resident in a controller which comprises a

processor 32 and a memory 34. Alternatively, the random number may be generated by an other

gaming device which communicates the random number to the animated gaming device 10 . It

shall be appreciated by those skilled in the art that the use of a random number generator is well

known in the art of designing gaming equipment. The method then proceeds to block 56 or

5   block 58.

At block 56, the method provides for the comparing of the random number to a table to

generate an outcome as described above. The outcome may be determined by another gaming

device in communication with the animated gaming system 10. Preferably, the table includes a

location number which is associated with a range of random numbers. The method then

10   proceeds to block 58.

At block 58, the outcome is identified and displayed by the animated figure 12. Using the

table identified above, the location number is communicated to the motor controller 44 and

sound generator 42. The motor controller 44 and sound generator 42 generate the appropriate

signals which are communicated to the motors 48a through 48c and the transducer 46,

15   respectively. One of the motors 48a through 48c moves the animated element 16. The housing

14 has at least one symbol which represents at least one prize as described above. An animated

element 16 is then used to identify the result of the outcome of the comparison in block 56. The

method then proceeds to decision diamond 60.

At decision diamond 60 it is determined whether to continue the game or not. If it is

20   decided that the game is to be continued, the method proceeds to block 52 and the animated

gaming device is re-engaged. If it is decided that the game is NOT to be continued, the game is

ended.

Referring to Figure 2B there is shown a more detailed method 70 for engaging the animated gaming system of Figure 2A. More particularly, attention is drawn to the blocks 71, 72 and 74 which describe the engagement of the animated gaming system described in Figure 2A.

5   At block 71, the method provides for the insertion of tokens into the animated gaming system. The insertion of tokens may be physical or may be electronic. Physical tokens include coins, paper currency, coupons, tokens from magnetic stripe cards or other such devices. Electronic tokens are generated by a network, or may be generated by a storage media such as a magnetic stripe card or smart card. The tokens are communicated to a token receiving

10   component 35 as described above. The method then proceeds to block 72.

At block 72, the method provides for the crediting of a player. The token is then converted to credits by said processor 32. The credits may be transferred or stored on the animated gaming system. The method then proceeds to block 74.

At block 74, the method provides for permitting the player to select how many credits to

15   play on the animated gaming system. For games of chance, the credits played are used to determine the size of the payment to the player. However, it shall be appreciated by those skilled in the art that the present animated gaming system is not confined to games of chance. The method then proceeds to block 76.

Blocks 76, 78, 80, and 82 are substantially similar to the blocks 52, 54, 56 and 58,

20   respectively. Therefore, the prior discussion of the functions performed in these steps are incorporated by reference. The method then proceeds to decision diamond 84.

At decision diamond 84 it is determined whether to continue the game or not. If it is decided that the game is to be continued, the method proceeds to block 74 and the animated gaming device is re-engaged after the player selects the credits to play. If it is decided that the game is not to be continued, the game is ended.

5

Gaming System

In an alternative embodiment the animated gaming system 10 is used in combination with another gaming device and this combination is referred to as gaming system 100 and is illustrated in Figure 3. The gaming system 100 includes a first gaming device 102, an animated gaming system 104 having an animated figure 105 and a housing 106. The first gaming device 102 may be a traditional gaming device such as a slot machine or video game. The animated figure 105 has a three-dimensional form and includes an animated element 108. The animated element may be configured to identify a prize. The housing 106 houses the animated figure 105 which is operatively coupled to the first gaming device 102. It shall be appreciated by those skilled in the art of gaming design, that the housing 106 includes a variety of symbols which may represent a variety of prizes such as the prizes described above.

In its preferred embodiment, the first gaming device 102 is a game such as a slot machine of general conventional construction and includes a coin slot 110, a card reader 111 and a lever arm 112. Most slot machines also include a push button 114 that can be activated in order to initiate play in lieu of the lever arm 112. The first gaming device 102 also includes a window which displays spinning reels 116a, 116b and 116c. The first gaming device 102 may be either

of the conventional mechanical type with rotating wheel or of the electronic type which simulates

rotating wheels and which includes a plurality of electronic video type displays. The prizes are

awarded with a coin dispenser 118. In at least one preferred embodiment, game apparatus 20

may be an S Plus model gaming device manufactured by International Game Technology in

5   Reno, Nevada.

Although the use of the slot machine is the preferred type of first gaming device 102 for

the gaming system 100, it should be apparent to those skilled in the art that other types of games

of chance such as poker machines, blackjack machines, keno machines and the like may also be

useful. It must be understood, therefore, that the description contained herein concerning the use

10   of a slot machine is by way of example only. In any case, regardless of the type of game of

chance or gaming machine being utilized, a slot machine 102 or other gaming machine or

combination thereof may be associated with the animated gaming system 104.

Referring back to figure 1B, an electrical output line 120 from the first gaming device 102

extends from the first gaming device 102 and is adapted to carry the output signal from the first

15   gaming device 102 to the animated figure 105. This output signal is intended to be representative

of a particular condition or play for the first gaming device 102. The output signal

communicated from output line 120 is communicated to processor 32 which processes signals

that control said transducer 46 and the motors 48a, 48b and 48c which control animated element

108. For example, a particular signal may appear on output line 120 indicating that a particular

20   event has occurred such as the insertion of a unique coin or multiple coins have been played. Or

a signal may represent the fact that a particular button (not shown) has been activated. In

addition, an appropriate signal could appear on output line 120 indicated that the slot machine

wheel have stopped and that the player did not win anything or that the wheels have stopped and

that the slot machine player has won. A different signal could obviously also appear depending

on the amount that has been won. As should be readily apparent, a substantial number of

5   different signals could appear individually or in combination on the output line 120 indicating

any one or more of a large number of different conditions of play of the first gaming device 102.

Preferably, the output line 120 is configured to communicate a bonus-activating event.

This event may be the result of many different types of events. For example, a bonus-activating

event may comprise displaying a particular symbol, such as a "bonus" symbol, or combination of

10   symbols, such as three "horse" symbols, on reels 116a, 116b, and 116c. If the game being played

is poker based, the bonus-activating event may be occurrence of a certain hand, such as a royal

flush. Furthermore, a bonus-activating event may occur when a player accumulates a number of

symbols or game outcomes over a number of separate game plays. For example, a bonus-

activating event may occur when the player receives three "bonus" symbols during a period of

15   time. The bonus-activating event may be based on an external event. For example, a bonus-

activating event may occur when a group of players obtain a certain result.

Preferably, the gaming device of the present invention comprises an animated figure 105

which is engaged by the bonusing event described above. The control system for engaging the

animated figure is described in the discussion regarding the animated gaming system 10 in Figure

20   1A. Additionally, the animated gaming system 102 operates in a similar manner as the animated

gaming system 10 described above.

In operation, the first gaming device 102 is played and the animated gaming system 104 is activated when the bonusing event occurs. The bonusing event signal is communicated via output line 120 to the animated gaming control system. The animated element 108 is engaged and is used to identify the prize to be awarded to the player as described above.

5   Additionally, the animated gaming system 102 may include a combination of animated figures associated with a plurality of first gaming machines (not shown). Further still the animated gaming system 102 may be capable of directing its actions and sounds toward any one of the slot machine players. It is also within the scope of the present invention to provide a single gaming system 100 having a plurality of animated figures which respond individually or in

10   combination based on the play of a plurality of first gaming devices.

A Method For Operating The Gaming System

Referring to Figure 4 as well as Figure 3 and Figure 1B there is shown a method 150 for operating the animated gaming system 100 of Figure 3. The method 150 for operating the

15   animated gaming system 100 described above includes providing a first gaming device 102 and providing an animated gaming system 102 having an animated element 108.

At block 152 the method provides for engaging a first gaming device 102. The first gaming device 102 may be engaged by the insertion of tokens which may be physical or may be electronic as described above. The tokens are communicated to a coin slot 110 which acts as a

20   token receiving component. Once the token is received the player is credited and permitted to play the first gaming device 102. The player then selects the number of credits to play in the first

gaming device 102. The method then proceeds to block 154.

At block 154 the method provides for selecting a random number. The random number is generated by a random number generator which is resident in a controller. It shall be appreciated by those skilled in the art that the provisioning for a random number generator is well known in the art of designing gaming equipment. The method then proceeds to block 156.

At block 156 the method provides for comparing a random number to a table as described above. It shall be appreciated by those skilled in the art that the table includes a plurality of different combinations displayed by reels 116a, 116b, and 116c which are associated with a range of random numbers. The method then proceeds to decision diamond 158.

At diamond 158, the bonusing event is engaged. In an illustrative embodiment, the bonusing event is engaged by the first gaming device 102. Alternatively, the bonusing event is engaged by a separate component which is in communication with said first gaming device 102. The results of the bonusing event are communicated by output line 120 to the animated gaming system 104. If the bonusing event is not engaged, the method proceeds to diamond 160. At diamond 160 the player determines whether to continue playing the first gaming device 102. If the bonusing event is engaged, the method then proceeds to block 162.

At block 162, the animated gaming system 104 is engaged according to the bonusing event communicated from output line 120 from the first gaming device 102. The animated gaming system 104 includes a housing 106 which has a variety of symbols identifying a variety of prizes. The output line 120 communicates with the animated control system having a processor 32 which controls the movements of a plurality of animated elements such as animated

element 108. The method then proceeds to block 164.

At block 164, a second random number is selected. The random number is generated by a second random number generator which is resident in a controller which comprises a processor 32 and a memory 34 of the control system 30. The method then proceeds to block 166.

5   At block 166, the second random number is compared to a pay table as described above. Preferably, the table includes a location number which is associated with a range of random numbers. The method then proceeds to block 168.

At block 168, the outcome is identified and displayed by the animated figure. As described above, the location number is communicated to the motor controller 44 and sound

10   generator 42 by a processor 32. The motor controller 44 and sound generator 42 generate the appropriate signals which are communicated to the motors 48a through 48c and the transducer 46, respectively. One of the motors 48a through 48c moves the animated element 108. The housing 106 has at least one symbol which represents at least one prize as described previously. An animated element 108 is then used to identify the result of the outcome of the comparison in

15   block 166. The method then proceeds to block decision diamond 170.

At diamond 170, the player determines whether to continue playing the game. If the player decides to continue playing the game, the player is taken back to block 152 and the first gaming device is engaged. If the player decides not to continue playing the game, the game is ended.

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A Gaming System Having An Animated Display

Referring to Figure 5A there is shown an alternative gaming system 200 which communicates the output from a game device 202 to an animated display system 204. The gaming system 200 includes an animated display system 204 which is operatively coupled to the gaming device 202. Preferably, the game device 202 is a slot machine. However, it should be apparent to those skilled in the art that other games of chance may also be configured as game device 202. These other games of chance include poker machines, blackjack machines, keno machines and the like.

The animated display system 204 includes an animated figure 205 and housing 206. The animated figure 205 includes an animated element 208 which is, preferably, configured to move along the x-axis, y-axis and z-axis. The animated figure is managed by the control system 30 described above. However, in the preferred embodiment the electrical control system 30 for the animated figure 205 does not employ a pay table to determine the outcome that is displayed by the animated figure 205. Rather it is preferable that the gaming device 202 communicates the output to the animated figure 205 control system 30. The animated figure 205 then displays the prize that was determined by the gaming device 202. By way of example, the animated figure may be configured so the animated element 208 identifies one of plurality of prizes or identifies one of plurality of bonuses.

By way of example, and not of limitation, the animated element 208 is a hand that is controlled in the x-axis, y-axis and z-axis by motors 48a, 48b and 48c, respectively. (See Figure 1B). Figure 5A shows the results of a player which has not won a prize due to the outcome of

game device 202. Therefore, the animated element 208 does not identify a prize.

Referring to Figure 5B there is shown one example of gaming system 200 in which the outcome has determined that player receiving a prize. The outcome is displayed by the reels 216a, 216b, and 216c and the prize is displayed by animated figure 205 and animated element

5   208 which identifies a prize in display window 210 which identifies 32 credits. It shall be appreciated by those skilled in the art having the benefit of this disclosure that control system 30 controls the operation of the animated element 208 which identifies the prize.

Referring to Figure 5C there is shown another example of gaming system 200 which also provides the player with a "multiplier" prize illustrated by display component 220. The

10 multiplier prize is based on a multiple of credits played or is a separate game which is subject to a bonus activating event. In this embodiment, the bonus activating event and the bonus prize is determined by the game device 202. Alternatively, the bonus prize may be determined by the animated display device 204 as described previously.

The method for operation of the animated gaming system 200 is the similar to the method

15 described in Figure 2A described above. Preferably, the pay table will be associated with the gaming device 202 and the movements of animated figure 205 are based on the communications from gaming device 202. Alternatively, a pay table may be resident in the control system 30 of the animated display device.

Additionally, as shown in Figure 5A, the gaming system 200 may include a dispensing

20 module 222 which may dispense a fortune or some other type of information.

CONCLUSION

It can now be seen that the present invention solves many of the problems associated with the prior art. The present invention provides a animated gaming device and animated display device which may be used as a primary game or a bonus game or in combination with a primary

5   game. The present invention provides an animated gaming device which includes an animated figure having an animated element.

Although the description above contains many specifications, these should not be construed as limiting the scope of the invention but as merely providing illustrations of some of the presently preferred embodiments of this invention. The specification, for instance, makes

10   reference to bonus prizes. However, the present invention is not intended to be limited to bonus prizes. Rather it is intended that the present invention can be used independently as a stand-alone game. Thus, the scope of the invention should be determined by the appended claims and their legal equivalents rather than by the examples given.